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PSC 503.01: Policy Analysis

Jeffrey D. Greene

University of Montana, jeffrey.greene@umontana.edu

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PSc 503 Policy Management

Masters of Public Administration Program / Spring 2001

LA 344 -- 4:10-6:30 (Tuesdays)

Professor: Jeffrey Greene

Telephone: 243-6181 / Office: LA 356 / Office Hours: 3-3:30 p.m. on TUE, THU

E-mail: jeffrey@selway.umt.edu

TEXTS

Public Policy: An Evolutionary Approach, by Lester and Stewart

The World of the Policy Analyst, by Heineman, Bluhm, Peterson, and Kearny

Public Policy: Theories, Models, and Concepts, by McCool

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Public policy is one of the most exciting areas in political science and public administration. **PSc 503** is designed to provide students with an overview of the public policy process and an overview of the history and evolution of policy studies. The course also provides an introduction to the fundamental theories, concepts, terms, and methodologies associated with policy analysis, and an introduction to the basic procedures used in conducting policy analysis.

The purpose of the course is to acquaint students with the complexities of public policy and policy analysis. The course is intended to provide students with an adequate background at a level of understanding appropriate for a variety of public sector employment settings. The course will blend theory and practice.

Primary Objectives

Objective #1: To provide students with a general understanding of public policy and policy analysis by reading and discussing classic and contemporary literature. Students will be exposed to the basic concepts, terms, and methodologies associated with policy studies. In this process, students will gain a general understanding of the history and evolution of policy studies. Students' proficiency will be measured via a comprehensive exam.

Objective #2: To enhance students' ability to write concise reports pertaining to public policy. This

objective will be accomplished by having students write article critiques and an 8-10 page policy summary. Details of these projects are explained later in the syllabus. Students' proficiency will be assessed via the written article critiques and the policy summary paper.

Objective #3: To provide students with the basic procedures used to conduct policy analysis. Students' proficiency in this area will be assessed by material included on the comprehensive exam, which will include constructing a policy analysis design.

Upon successful completion of the course, students should be able to:

- 1). Demonstrate knowledge of the history and evolution of domestic public policy
- 2). Demonstrate an understanding of the fundamental terms and concepts associated with public policy and policy studies
- 3). Demonstrate proficiency at writing concise reports that deal with complex material
- 4). Be able to construct a policy analysis design
- 5). Demonstrate a thorough understanding of a specific policy by writing a policy summary.

It should be stressed that **PSc 503** contains many other secondary objectives. For example, oral communication skills and critical thinking skills are not primary objectives in **PSc 503** but are deeply embodied in the course.

REQUIREMENTS: EXAM, POLICY SUMMARY PAPER, and ARTICLE SUMMARIES

Exam

The exam will be given in class and students are expected to take the exam during the scheduled time. The exam will include defining terms and concepts, essays that require the integration of concepts and the use of critical thinking skills, and creating a policy analysis design.

Policy Summary Paper

The policy summary paper is intended to enhance students' ability to write concise reports and demonstrate a competent understanding of a specific policy area. Students may select any policy area. Simply stated, a policy summary is a concise overview of a real public policy area that could be used as a chapter or section in a report, or as a freestanding report that one might construct for a public agency. The Lester and Stewart text provides four excellent examples (the chapters on education, crime, welfare, and environmental policy) that can serve as models for your paper. In short, after reading a policy summary, the reader should have an understanding of the specific policy area. Policy summaries should provide an overview of the policy area, include a brief overview of the history and evolution of the policy, the pertinent issues and debates associated with the policy area, and provide alternative solutions currently being considered to solve problems associated with the policy.

Article Critique Guidelines

The McCool text contains a variety of articles that will be assigned to students on the first day of class. Part of designated classes will be used for brief oral summaries of the assigned articles. The articles will be assigned to "individual students" and a written summary should be prepared to hand out to the class. The critiques constitute 20 percent of one's final grade. *All students are expected to read all of the assigned articles for each class but only have to prepare a written critique for their pre-assigned article.*

Each student is responsible to have thoroughly read the article, be prepared to present an overview of the article, and be prepared to respond to questions from the instructor and the class. The total time of the presentation should be no longer than 5 minutes. There are some specific questions one should consider while reading the article and developing a summary.

1. What is the major subject and theme of the article?
2. What is the major question the author addresses?
3. What techniques, tools of analysis, or methods are employed by the author to answer the question?
4. What major points does the author make?
5. What does the author conclude? What suggestions are made?
6. What is the relevance of the article to theory or practice? (What does it mean?)

Grade Weights

Exam. 40% May 1 (Tuesday)

Paper 40% Papers due May 8 (Tuesday)

Article Critiques....20% Due when presented in class

ATTENDANCE: Students are encouraged to attend class. Poor attendance may affect one's final grade.

Note: There will be no class on February 27 due to a Kettering Foundation conference in Dayton, Ohio.

COURSE OUTLINE and READINGS

(Sessions will often take two weeks to cover)

PART I THE BASICS OF PUBLIC POLICY

1 Introduction No Readings (January 30)

What is Public Policy? What is Policy Analysis?

2,3 Background and Context (February 6, 13)

Lester & Stewart, Chapters 1,2

McCool, Sections 1,2 (*Article Critiques are due February 13*)

Heineman, Bluhm, Peterson, & Kearny "The Emergence of a Field" _____

Assigned Articles (McCool) _____

"Interest Groups and the Nature of the State" by Truman _____

"Three Types of Pluralism" by Kelso _____

"The Golden Era of Interest Group Pluralism" by Garson _____

"The Comparative Study of Political Elites" by Putnam _____

"A Critique of Elitist Theory of Democracy" by Walker _____

4,6 Approaches and Models (February 20, March 6)

(No class on February 27, Session 5, due to a Kettering Foundation conference in Dayton, Ohio)

Lester & Stewart, Chapters 3,4

Heineman, Bluhm, Peterson, & Kearny "Rationality and Decision Making" _____

Assigned Articles (McCool) (*Article Critiques are due March 6*)

"The Political System Under Stress" by Easton _____

"Fiscal Behavior of the Modern Democratic State by Mitchell _____

"The Science of Muddling Through" by Lindblom _____

"Stages of the Policy Process" by Ripley _____

7,9 Analysis in the Policy Process: Agenda Setting, Policy Formation, Implementation, and Evaluation (March 13, 27) *Session 8 is Spring Break, March 19-23*

Lester & Stewart, Chapters 5,6,7,8,9

Assigned Articles (McCool) (*Article Critiques are due March 27*)

"Four Systems of Policy, Politics, and Choice" by Lowi _____

"Developing Public Policy Theory..." by Greenberg, Miller, Mohr, and Vladeck _____

"Typologies of Public Policy..." by Steinberger _____

"Promoting Policy Theory" by Spitzer _____

8 Spring Break March 19-23

PART 2 ANALYZING POLICY CHOICES AND POLICY ISSUES

10,11 Analyzing Public Policy Choices (April 3, 10)

Lester & Stewart, Chapters 10,11 (Week 9)

Lester & Stewart, Chapters 12,13,14,15 (Week 10)

Assigned Articles (McCool) (*Article Critiques are due April 10*)

"American Business, Public Policy, Case Studies, and Political Theory" by Lowi _____

"The Subsystems in Perspective" by Freeman _____

"Issue Networks and the Executive Establishment" by Heclo _____

"Patterns of Influence among Committees, Agencies, and Interest Groups" by Hamm _____

"An Advocacy Coalition Framework of Policy Change and the Role of Policy Learning Therein" by Sabatier _____

12 The Cultural Setting and Impact of Ethics in Public Policy (April 17)

Heineman, Bluhm, Peterson, & Kearny "The Cultural Setting of Policy Analysis" _____

"Ethics and Public Policy Analysis" _____

"Democracy and the Fragmentation of Consensus" _____

13 Policy Issues (April 24)

Heineman, Bluhm, Peterson, & Kearny "Policy Analysis and the Political Arena" _____

"Policy Devolution and Policy Analysis" _____

"Policy Analysis in the Judicial Process" _____

14 Exam (May 1)

15 Papers Due and Presentations (May 8)

[Study Guide for Exam](#)

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